



Editorial

Norman Goldstein MD
Editor, Hawaii Medical Journal

The Hawaii Birth Defects Program

Birth defects are the number one cause of infant mortality in Hawaii, with over 400 fetal deaths each year and rising. The Hawaii Birth Defects program of the University of Hawaii at Manoa was formed twelve years ago, and is the primary source of data on Statewide birth defects including those of the neural tubes.

With one in every 1,000 births in the US having a neural tube defect, the lay press has promoted the use of folic acid for pregnant women. Now, we physicians need to be aware of the personal and social significance of treatment and non-treatment of the various tube defects.

Hawaii Medical Journal thanks Ruth D. Merz, MS, Administrator of the Hawaii Birth Defects Program, and Mathias B. Forrester, who worked with her on the manuscript, Epidemiology of Neural Tube Defects in Hawaii. The Program monitors more than 1,000 different birth defects in our state, and can be reached at 808-832-0278.

Alcohol Use in Hawaii

The manuscript by Earl S. Hishinuma PhD, *et al*, is significantly longer than most of our published papers. It is so important and has so much significant data, we could not reduce it, and the bibliography is extremely intensive.

The lead article in the July 2000 issue of the Journal of American Academy of Dermatology ("The Blue Journal") is a very complete paper, including color photographs on the "Cutaneous Manifestations of Alcohol Abuse."* Contact the Hawaii Medical Library for a black-and-white photocopy or call my office for color copies.

The study by Hishinuma and Associates again confirms that Hawaii is an ideal location for clinical research. I have long emphasized to basic researchers and clinical researchers as well as to pharmaceutical companies that there is no better place for multi-ethnic studies than Hawaii where we have a "rainbow of skins."

Emphysematous Pyelonephritis

The third manuscript is not about a common disorder, but nevertheless the paper is an important one. Mahalo to Jinichi Tokeshi MD and medical student, Lisa Hui, for this submission.

* Smith E & Fenske NA. Cutaneous Manifestations of Alcohol Abuse. J Am Acad Dermatol 2000; 43:1-16



Letter to the Editor

Physicians' Greatest Enemy – Complacency!

There is not a day you can enter a doctor's lounge or locker room and not hear stories of the financial bind that these physicians suffer from decreasing medical insurance reimbursement. Gone are the days when physicians could devote their attention only to medical practice and let the financial reward take care of itself. Some how, during the past two decades, physicians came to be viewed by the public as "earning too much." Little attention was paid to the long hours of service by physicians required to attend to the acute or chronic medical and surgical problems. The prevailing public opinion has become; medical care costs too much in the U.S. Without looking at the real causes for the rising costs of medical care, such as pharmaceutical and technological costs, the doctors became the scape goats for the problem – not without the complacency of the physicians themselves.

In this state, supporting the cause of quality medical care, which was recognized to be in jeopardy by the Hawaii Coalition for Health and a few clear thinking HMA leaders, there has been a movement to remedy this predicament. Yet, it is astounding today to realize that the average physician in this state is not aware of the contents of the recent agreement signed by HMSA with the State Insurance Commissioner. They are not aware that the practicing physicians, approved by their own specialty, may now represent the interests of these private practitioners in fee discussions at HMSA. Thanks to the diligence and hard work of Dr. Arleen Meyers and the Hawaii Coalition for Health, physicians may now have at least some influence in fee discussions.

However, I have found that most physicians are either too busy or too complacent to take advantage of this new opportunity. Too bad, because with rising costs of providing quality medical care – increasing rents, salaries for office staff, equipment, etc, this society is fast becoming an environment in which one has to be financially independent to practice quality medicine! Complacency got us into this rut, but we need to recognize that the absence of complacency may get us out!

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Until there's a cure, there's the American Diabetes Association.